

REPLY UNDER 37 CFR 1.116—

EXPEDITED PROCEDURE—TECHNOLOGY CENTER 2100

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Serial No. 10/623,878

Attorney Docket No. 200206812-1

Title: EMBEDDED DATA LAYERS

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**IN THE CLAIMS**RECEIVED  
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Claims 1-10 (Cancelled).

11. (Currently Amended) A method of watermarking an image, comprising:  
associating digital metadata with each image object of two or more image objects of an image; and  
encoding the digital metadata into two or more data layers of a digital steganographic watermark of the image, wherein one or more selected data layers of the two or more data layers encodes the digital metadata associated with a selected image object of the two or more image objects.
12. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11, wherein encoding the metadata into two or more data layers of a digital steganographic watermark of the image further comprises encoding the digital metadata into two or more data layers of a digital steganographic watermark of the image, where the steganographic watermark is a high coding rate watermark.
13. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11, wherein encoding the metadata into two or more data layers of a digital watermark of the image further comprises encoding the metadata into two or more data layers of a digital watermark of the image, where wherein the watermark contains two or more sub-watermarks, each sub-watermark of a differing encoding method and/or transform.
14. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 13, wherein each layer of the two or more data layers are encoded into a selected sub-watermark.
15. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11, encoding the digital metadata into two or more data layers of a digital steganographic watermark of the image further comprises

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encoding one or more data areas in at least one of the two or more data layers of the digital steganographic watermark.

16. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11, further comprising:  
encoding two or more layers of digital metadata in a digital steganographic watermark in one or more image objects of the image.
17. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11, wherein encoding the digital metadata into two or more data layers of a digital steganographic watermark of the image further comprises encoding at least one of a manufacturer information layer, an object characteristics layer, an order information layer, and a manufacturer designated layer.
18. (Currently Amended) A method of digital steganographic watermarking at least one sub-image of an image, comprising:  
encoding a plurality of layers of data in a digital steganographic watermark of at least one sub-image of an image, wherein the plurality of layers of data are metadata associated with the at least one sub-image.
19. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 18, wherein encoding the plurality of layers of data in a digital steganographic watermark of at least one sub-image of the image further comprises encoding the plurality of layers of data in a high coding rate digital steganographic watermark.
20. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 18, wherein encoding the plurality of layers of data in a digital steganographic watermark of at least one sub-image of the image further comprises encoding the plurality of layers of data in a digital steganographic watermark containing a plurality of sub-watermarks, each sub-watermark encoded with a different steganographic encoding method and/or transform.

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21. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 20, wherein each layer of the plurality of layers of data are encoded into a separate digital steganographic sub-watermark.
22. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 18, wherein encoding the plurality of layers of data in a digital steganographic watermark of at least one sub-image of the image further comprises encoding one or more data areas in the two or more layers of data of the at least one sub-image.
23. (Currently Amended) A computer-usable medium having computer-readable instructions stored thereon for execution by a processor to perform a method comprising:  
associating digital metadata with each image object of two or more image objects of an image; and  
encoding the digital metadata into two or more data layers of a digital steganographic watermark of the image, wherein one or more selected data layers of the two or more data layers encodes the digital metadata associated with a selected image object of the two or more image objects.
24. (Currently Amended) The computer-usable medium of claim 23, wherein encoding the digital metadata into two or more data layers of a digital steganographic watermark of the image further comprises encoding the digital metadata into two or more data layers of a digital steganographic watermark of each image object of one or more image objects of the image, where the digital metadata associated with a selected object of the one or more image objects is encoded in the digital steganographic watermark placed in the selected image object.
25. (Currently Amended) The computer-usable medium of claim 23, wherein the two or more data layers are encoded in a high coding rate digital steganographic watermark.

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26. (Currently Amended) The computer-usable medium of claim 23, wherein the digital steganographic watermark contains two or more digital steganographic sub-watermarks, each sub-watermark of a differing steganographic encoding method and/or transform.
27. (Currently Amended) The computer-usable medium of claim 26, wherein each of the two or more data layers are encoded into a selected digital steganographic sub-watermark.

Claims 28. - 58. (Cancelled).